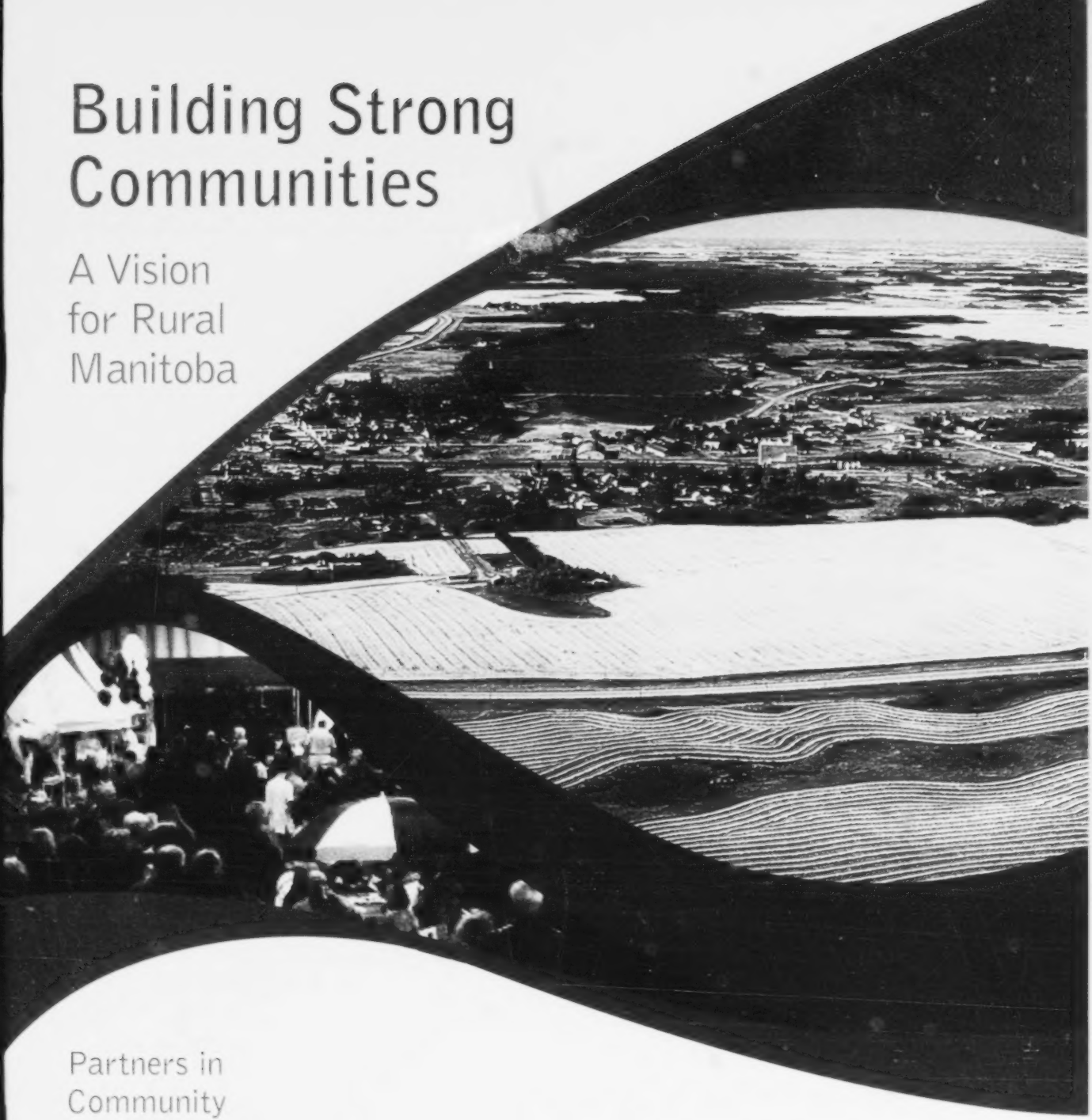
Building Strong Communities

A Vision for Rural Manitoba



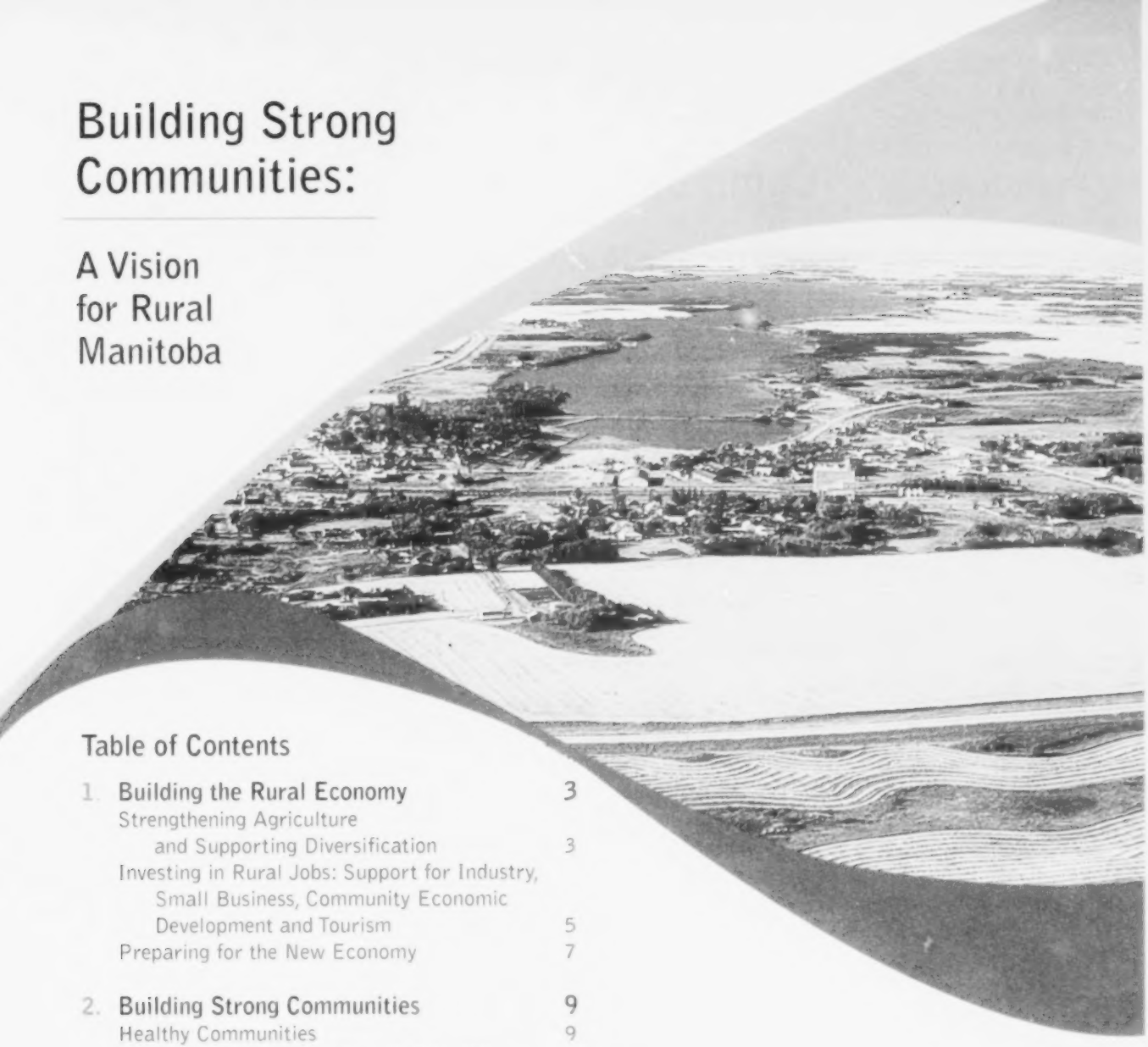
Partners in Community Development

Manitoba

Building for the Future

Building Strong Communities:

A Vision for Rural Manitoba



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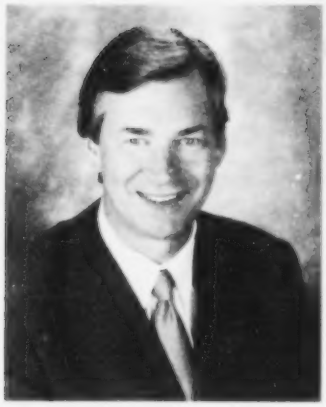


PREMIER'S MESSAGE

Rural citizens want the same opportunities as all Manitobans: access to quality jobs, a healthy economy, safe water, safe communities, and quality public services. In short, they want to enjoy life and contribute to society.

We want to provide the framework, support, and flexibility within which rural communities can adapt to change and support new enterprise while preserving what rural citizens value the most: a sense of community and rural way of life.

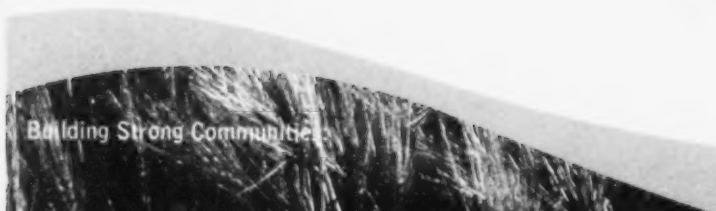
We are committed to an improved quality of life for all rural Manitobans. We believe in an approach that contributes to the economic and social well being by making investments in not only the rural economy, but also education, healthcare, agriculture, and the environment.

We know how important it is for rural Manitobans to shape their own future. This means supporting rural people and their communities so they can continue to face the future with confidence.

"Building Strong Communities" is our vision for rural Manitoba - a vision that builds on our diversity by ensuring rural policy is flexible and focused to meet the needs of all regions of our province.

Together we can build a new rural society – a society that is better equipped to manage change, maximize opportunities, and create a more sustainable future for all of us.

Hon. Gary Doer
Premier of Manitoba



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1. Building the Rural Economy

The ability of rural Manitobans to adapt to change is a key strength of the rural economy. Farmers have maintained their integral role in the economy by diversifying their operations and implementing new farming methods.

Similarly, small businesses, co-ops and local industries that have long occupied the main streets of rural communities are adapting to the changing economy. They are also being joined by new enterprises, ranging from home-based businesses to value-added industries such as the Dow BioProduct strawboard plant in Elie.

Through a variety of innovative programs and supports, the province is partnering with Manitobans to foster the continued growth of the rural economy.

***Bridging Generations** is a financial program that helps ease the transfer of family farms from one generation to the next. Operated by the Manitoba Agriculture Credit Corporation (MACC), the program reduces up-front costs for young farmers while providing a guaranteed income to retiring farmers. Introduced in 2002, Bridging Generations approved almost 100 land transfers totalling $11.4 million in the first nine months of the program.*

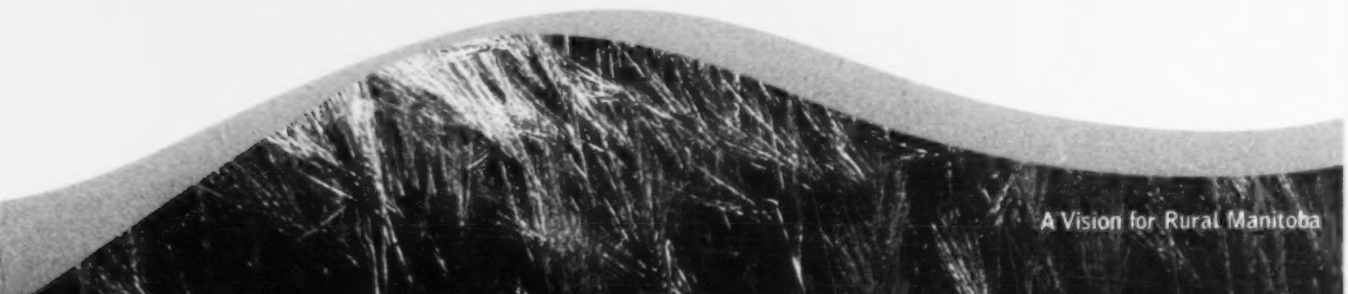
Strengthening Agriculture and Supporting Diversification

Manitoba has one of the most diversified agriculture sectors in Canada and it remains the cornerstone of our rural economy. Manitobans know that the success of their communities is directly linked to the success of their neighbouring farm families.

In 2001, the province released *Destination 2010*. The document, based on consultations, set a long-term vision for agriculture policy with a goal to strengthen farm families. Fulfilling this goal is the basis of the province's agriculture policy.

Supporting Farm Families

- The province negotiated cost-shared **emergency funding** with the federal government for grain and oilseed producers in 2000 and 2001, totalling $192 million.
- $7 million is put back into farmers' operations annually as a result of the province reducing the portion of farm property subject to taxation. This tax break and other provincial tax exemptions provide $188 million in annual savings for farmers.
- The **Farm and Rural Stress Line** was reinstated in 2000 to provide confidential information, support and counselling to farm and rural families.
- The province hired a **farm safety co-ordinator** to work with communities and the agriculture industry to improve health and safety on the farm.



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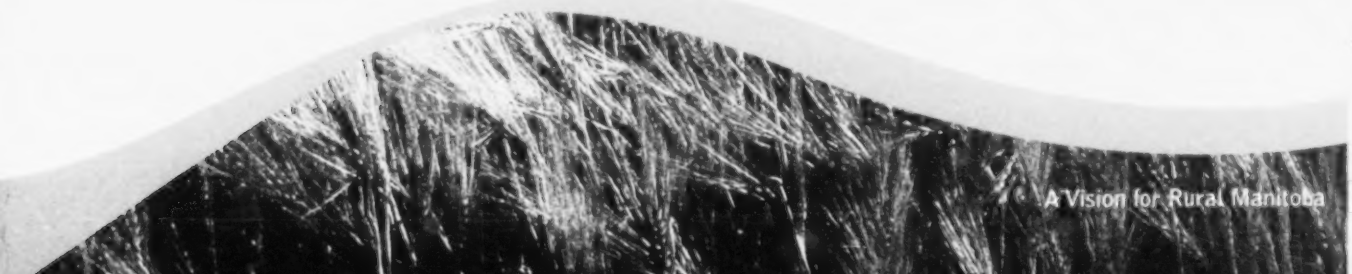
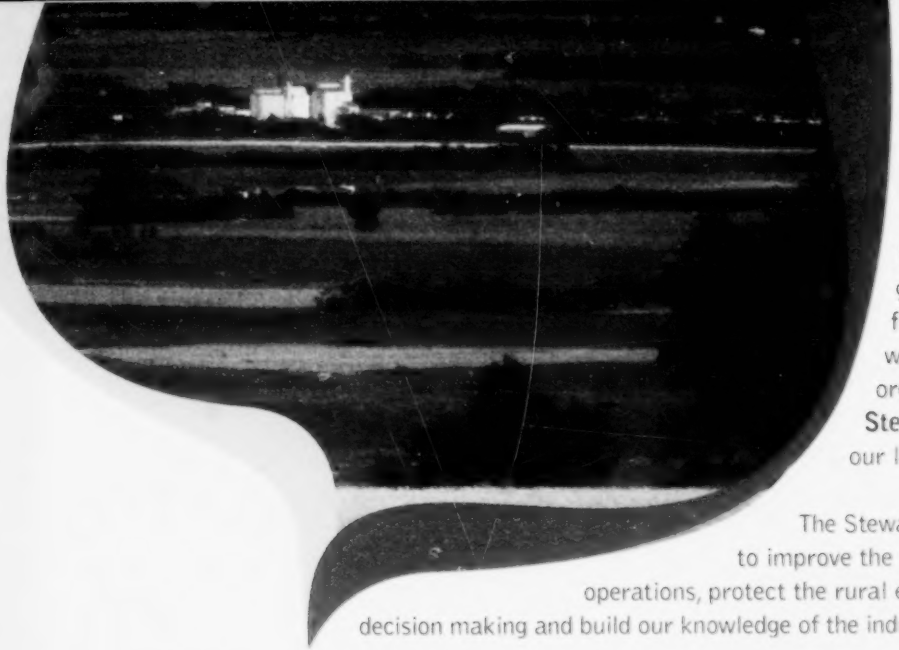




Diversifying Agriculture

Livestock is a multi-billion dollar industry and one of the fastest growing areas of opportunities for farmers. The province is working with industry, communities and organizations through the **Livestock Stewardship Initiative** to enhance our livestock sector.

The Stewardship Initiative includes policies to improve the management of livestock operations, protect the rural environment, improve land use decision making and build our knowledge of the industry through increased research.

While beef and pork remain the largest sectors, the livestock industry is diversifying. For instance, the province recently hired a goat and sheep specialist to support this growing sector.

Other diversification initiatives include:

- Farmers have received over $100 million over two years from the enhanced **Diversification Loan Guarantee Plus Program**, operated by MACC.
- The province is supporting Manitoba's rapidly expanding food processing industry through an **irrigation development program** to increase Manitoba's irrigated crop production capacity.
- Since the province hired an **organic specialist**, organic agriculture has grown at an annual rate of 20 per cent.
- An **Aboriginal Agriculture Initiative co-ordinator** position was created to work more closely with First Nation communities in taking advantage of agricultural opportunities.

The **Covering New Ground** program funds innovative efforts by individuals and organizations to diversify agriculture and sustain our natural resources. Covering New Ground has attracted more than 300 partners who have worked on over 1,000 projects. Projects range from research on medicinal plant production to water quality protection.

Improvements to Crop Insurance

- In addition to having the lowest administrative costs of any province, Manitoba Crop Insurance premium rates were reduced an average of 19 per cent in 2001 and coverage has continually expanded to include non-traditional crops.
- Excessive Moisture Insurance was introduced in 2000 to compensate Manitoba farmers who are unable to seed due to floods or excess moisture.

Investing in Rural Jobs: Support for Industry, Small Business, Community Economic Development and Tourism

Succesful rural community economic development is a result of careful planning, infrastructure development, environmental awareness and support for local government, focused not only on jobs, but on the long-term wellbeing of the community and its people. Provincial investment in rural communities is helping to attract industry and create new opportunities in tourism, small businesses and co-operatives.

Supporting Industry in Rural Manitoba

The provincial government has formed working partnerships with several expanding and innovative industries across Manitoba. One of the fastest growing new industries is food processing. In addition to providing significant jobs and investment in communities, food processing plants are important markets for Manitoba farmers.

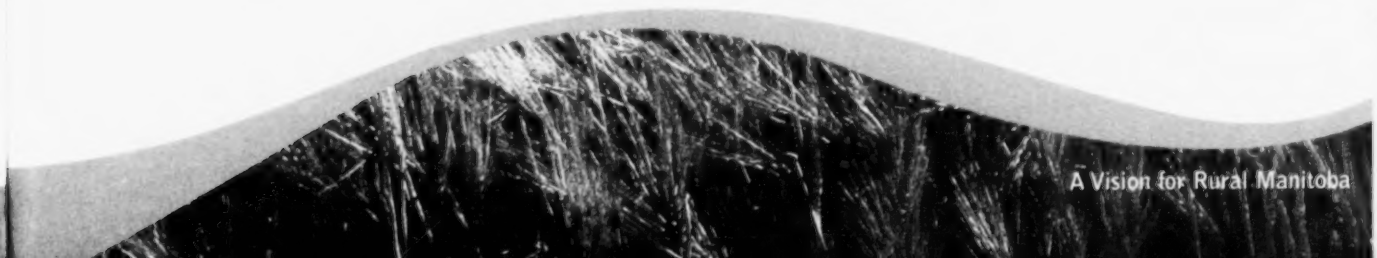
The province is working with **Maple Leaf Foods** to address the labour force needs of the Phase II expansion of their Brandon pork processing plant. Assiniboine Community College has introduced a pork processing training course. More opportunities are being created for Aboriginal workers, who now make up 40 per cent of the labour force at the Brandon plant.

The **J.R. Simplot** potato processing plant in Portage la Prairie received $150 million in provincial funding to improve infrastructure. The plant is expected to provide 230 direct jobs and 500 indirect jobs. It will also diversify agriculture through increased potato production in southern Manitoba. This diversification also has spinoff benefits in other parts of Manitoba, such as the Parkland region where the province is assisting with seed potato test plots.

The Simplot plant had to meet provincial environmental standards and appear before a Clean Environment Commission (CEC) public hearing. The province has also committed to CEC hearings on the Phase II expansion of Maple Leaf Foods. The government is working with industries like Maple Leaf and Simplot to ensure their operations grow in a responsible, environmentally sustainable way.

Other partnerships with rural industry include:

- A $3 million provincial loan to ensure continued local ownership of **McKenzie Seeds** in Brandon. The seed packaging and marketing company employs more than 200 people.
- A $5 million loan guarantee for Brett Young Seeds and $1 million Agriculture Research and Development Initiative loan helped the company make improvements and innovations to its products.
- Manitoba Hydro's competitive rates helped the growth of two chemical plants in western Manitoba. Albchem, an Alberta company, chose Virden for its new $40 million sodium chlorate plant and Nexen chemicals is making a $60 million expansion to its Brandon plant. The two projects are creating over 30 permanent jobs along with construction and other indirect jobs.



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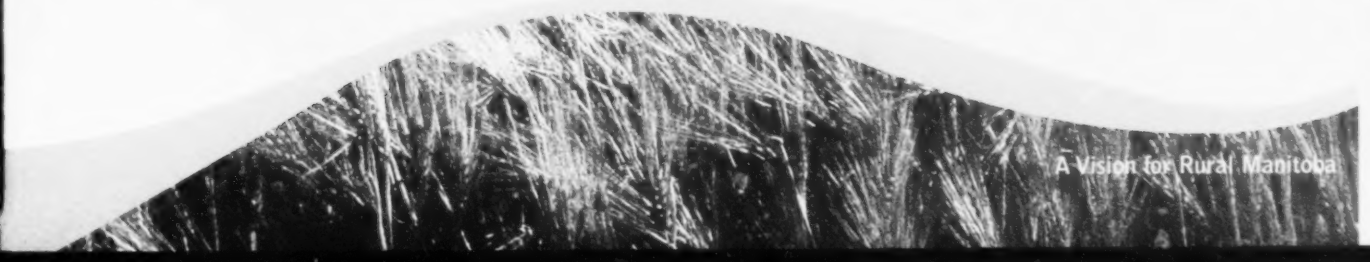

Provincial funding of $7.9 million for the $11 million expansion of the Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie will allow its clients to develop, process and package products on-site for sale to Canadian and international markets. FDC is expected to create over 300 jobs, primarily in rural areas.

Rural businesses are also benefiting from province-wide tax savings:

- Since 1999, the small business tax rate has fallen from 8 per cent to 5 per cent.
- The amount of taxable small business income has increased from $200,000 to $300,000.

*The **Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)**, is funded by revenue from video lottery terminals in rural Manitoba. REDI invests the money into the rural economy to support economic development and diversification. REDI serves as the umbrella for eight different programs in research and studies, business support, youth development and strategic initiatives. Since the fall of 1999, REDI has invested over $9 million in rural projects, resulting in over $25 million in capital spending and 1,176 jobs.*

Supporting Small Businesses and Community Economic Development

The ability to innovate and adapt to change is key to the growth of successful communities. They need to control their own futures but can require support to reach their economic potential. A variety of provincial programs help businesses, individuals, local governments and organizations create economic development opportunities in Manitoba communities. Businesses and local economic development organizations have access to loans, grants and business and marketing advice through these programs.

Examples of assistance include:

- There are 24 **Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre** offices across Manitoba that provide a one-stop shop for businesses seeking information on provincial and federal programs.
- When the **Canada/Manitoba Economic Development Partnership Agreement (EDPA)** ended in 2002, it had invested $40 million in economic development projects across the province.

Manitoba has committed to multi-year funding for Brandon's Keystone Centre including $500,000 for a new ice plant, and three annual payments of $250,000. These measures will strengthen the Keystone Centre's position as an important community facility and an economic generator for western Manitoba.

Co-operatives

Co-ops have always played an important role in the rural economy. Whether it is consumer co-ops selling staple groceries and farm supplies or new generation co-ops producing value-added agricultural products, the model continues to be an important economic development tool.

The province supports new and existing co-ops through funding and support programs. The province is encouraging the consideration of new generation co-ops to develop ethanol plants in rural areas.

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Tourism

The tourism industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world and Manitoba is taking full advantage of this growth. From 2000 to 2003, the Manitoba tourism industry grew by almost 30 per cent and now supports 60,000 jobs. It also contributes more than $3.5 million annually to Manitoba's economy. In 2002, Manitoba was the only jurisdiction in Canada to record an increase in overseas tourists.

Provincial initiatives to encourage further growth in tourism include:

- Significant investments in the growing area of eco-tourism, including the grant provided to the Interlake's famous Narcisse Snake Dens in 2002.
- A Watchable Wildlife initiative was launched to expand wildlife protection and eco-tourism opportunities in provincial parks by increasing wildlife viewing opportunities for the public.
- The province has invested $200,000 improving campgrounds in several regions, including Big Whiteshell on the Manitoba-Ontario border, and Childs Lake in the Duck Mountains.
- The province is opening 1,000 new cottage lots and 1,000 new campsites across Manitoba, expanding opportunities for Manitobans to enjoy the outdoors.
- A $1 million federal-provincial grant has helped Selkirk develop waterfront facilities and greenspace along the Red River.

Preparing for the New Economy

The recent creation of the government department, Manitoba Energy, Science and Technology, recognizes the key role these sectors play in our economy. Developing and taking advantage of innovations in areas of clean energy production, communications technology and value-added processing are key provincial priorities. Rural Manitoba is at the leading edge of these sectors in the new economy.

Ethanol

The province's Energy Development Initiative commits Manitoba to expand both the production and use of ethanol. The province has committed to mandating the use of ethanol in Manitoba in the future. Made from renewable sources such as grain, ethanol development provides multiple benefits to the whole province. Ethanol production will result in jobs and investment in rural communities. It will provide a market for Manitoba grown wheat. Ethanol use will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by gasoline. Furthermore, the co-product from the ethanol production process is a valuable livestock feed.

Manitoba has established itself as a leader in clean energy production. The province's Energy Development Initiative will ensure Manitoba can continue to take advantage of future opportunities in this sector.

The new provincial Ethanol Office will co-ordinate the growth of the industry and encourage locally owned and operated ethanol plants, with a focus on the co-op model of ownership. Increasing ethanol production in Manitoba will reduce the need for imported gas by 10 per cent. In its place, will be homegrown, clean, renewable ethanol, made from Manitoba wheat.

There are several other provincial energy initiatives underway:

- Through its programs and loans for energy efficiency, **Manitoba Hydro's Power Smart Program** has helped Manitoba residents reduce costs while saving energy that can be sold to premium export markets. The energy savings for 2003 are estimated at 200 megawatts equal to the size of the proposed Wuskatim dam and enough to power a city the size of Brandon.
- Manitoba Hydro is studying the potential use of **solar** and **wind power** in Manitoba. It is offering advice and loans to install **ground source (or geothermal) heat pumps.**

Research: Integral to the New Economy

The province has committed $6 million to the $25 million **Richardson Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals Research Centre** at the University of Manitoba. Other partners include the university, the federal government and the private sector. Functional foods and nutraceuticals are foods and byproducts that provide health benefits and reduce the risk of some chronic diseases. Catering to a growing number of consumers who use natural foods and byproducts to improve and maintain their health, the nutraceutical and functional food industry is expected to generate annual sales of $500 billion worldwide by 2010. The centre will play a critical role in creating new markets for agricultural products. Several Manitoba crops including oats, wheat, buckwheat, canola, flax and hemp can be used to produce functional foods. The centre will also reinforce the university's reputation as a leader in agriculture research, while creating high-end jobs for Manitobans.

The province and federal governments also funded a centre of excellence for research and technology to expand the development and marketing of **Canadian malt barley.**

Improving Communications in Rural Manitoba

- The province's provincial data network (PND) is being upgraded to enhance high-speed Internet and broadband access for hospitals and government offices. This upgrade will enhance the government's ability to deliver programs, such as Telehealth, and will act as a catalyst for future expansion of high-speed telecommunications to rural Manitoba.
- The province's Broadband Project Office is partnering with the private sector and community organizations to provide high-speed Internet service to regions where it does not currently exist.
- Through a partnership with the federal government, the provincial Community Connections Program has established Internet connections in over 300 rural sites. They allow individuals to receive and send e-mail, conduct job searches and do business online.

2. Building Strong Communities

Healthy Communities

Access to reliable and quality health care is fundamental to sustaining rural communities and attracting newcomers to rural areas. Manitoba has become a leader in new health care policy and some of the most innovative programs have been in the area of rural health delivery. These programs include the **Telehealth Network**, improved funding for **emergency services** and the expansion of the **midwifery program**. The province has also provided significant resources to train and retain health professionals. Since 1999, 500 new training spaces have been created for technicians, therapists, health-care aides, nurses and doctors.

The province has strived for greater efficiency and co-operation by amalgamating health authorities, including two in rural Manitoba. Greater co-operation among urban and rural health facilities is providing a more efficient health care system. For instance, more surgeries are now being done in rural hospitals to help reduce surgical waiting times for elective surgery. Hospitals in Steinbach and Ste. Anne are taking on 350 general and orthopedic surgeries.

Telehealth Network

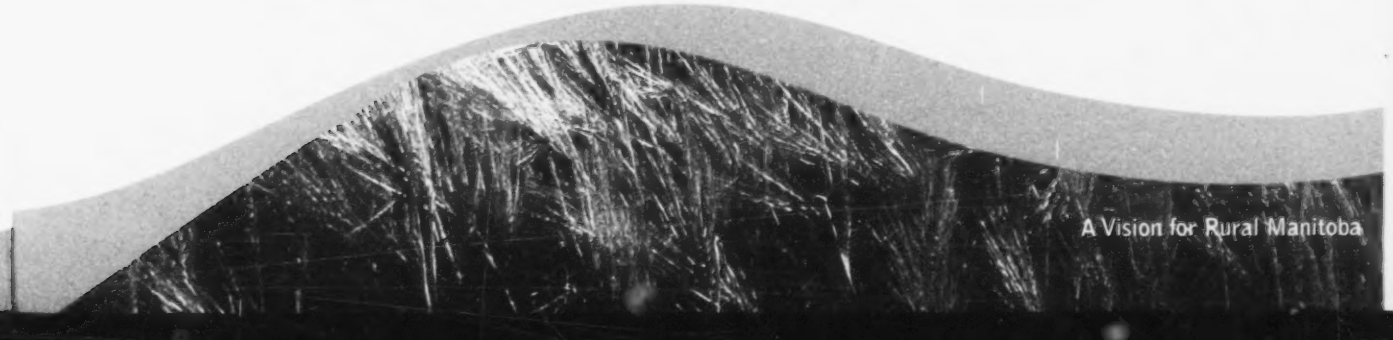
Telehealth links medical specialists to patients and colleagues provincewide, allowing rural Manitobans better access to health care. The Telehealth Network, which includes 12 rural sites, allows a specialist in Winnipeg to see patients in other communities without patients having to travel great distances.

Emergency Medical Services

- Funding has increased for rural emergency medical services, including the purchase of 70 new ambulances and upgraded ambulance communication systems.

Physician recruitment and retention strategy

- In 2000, medical school spaces increased from 70 to 85. Nine medical school spaces are designated for training physicians to work in rural and northern Manitoba.
- Opportunities for medical students and residents to train in rural communities have been increased, along with opportunities for rural doctors to receive advanced skills training.
- The Office of Rural and Northern Health was established in Dauphin to help recruit physicians in rural and northern Manitoba and to co-ordinate programs that meet rural and northern health needs.
- Manitoba introduced one of the first programs in Canada to facilitate the licensing of international medical graduates to allow them to practise in Manitoba.
- Grants for medical students and residents have been designed to enhance physician recruitments. Many of these grants are conditional on students practising in rural areas.



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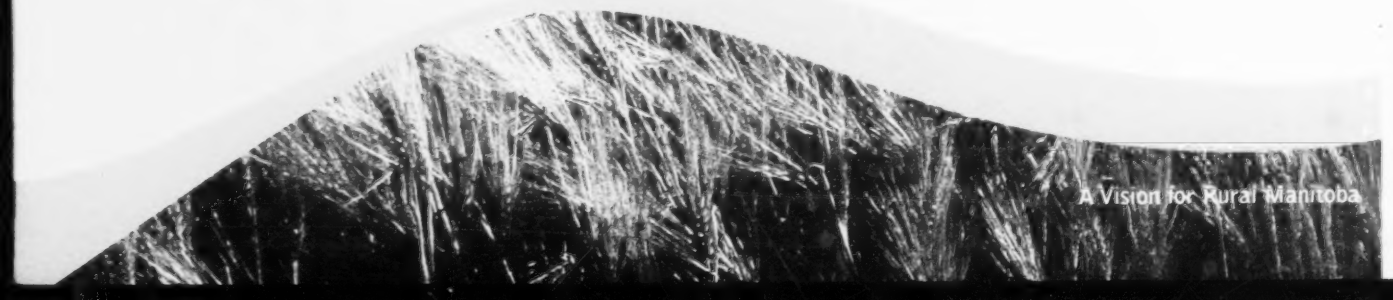


More Nurses

A provincial training and recruitment plan for nurses includes the reinstatement of the Diploma Registered Nursing Program and a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program. The LPN course is offered on a rotating basis in Manitoba communities that previously did not have access to the course. In 2002, almost three times as many nurses graduated than in 1999 and about 90 per cent of them are now working in Manitoba.

Building Health Infrastructure

Significant upgrades have been made to health capital and equipment in rural Manitoba. Projects include major redevelopments of hospitals in Gimli, Beausejour and Brandon, new chemotherapy units and the expansion of personal care homes across Manitoba. In addition, 40 per cent of federal funds for diagnostic equipment are being directed to rural and northern Manitoba.

Creating Opportunities Through Education

At the forefront of Manitoba's economic strategy is an emphasis on education and lifelong learning. Access to education allows all citizens to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by Manitoba's changing economy. Education also ensures adequate numbers of trained individuals to meet the labour force needs of both the private and public sector.

Support for K - Senior 4

For the past four years, stable funding for Manitoba schools was provided through annual funding increases at a rate matching or exceeding the province's economic growth. These increases have been directed to several areas.

- Since 2000, the province has announced over $250 million in new education capital projects.
- A new $2.5 million declining enrolment grant was provided to assist school divisions make adjustments for declining enrolments.
- Strobe lights were added to school buses to improve safety.
- CyberSchools Manitoba was launched to provide e-mail access and other online tools for students, teachers and administrators throughout the province.

The amalgamation of school divisions has helped reduce administrative costs and redundancy in the public school system. This included 25 rural divisions that were combined into seven. A cap on divisions' administrative expenditures also ensures that education funds go directly to the classroom rather than administration.

Investment in Colleges and Universities

Rural students often face a higher cost of living when they leave home to attend post-secondary institutions. Financial assistance to students, distance education and the expansion of college courses have improved opportunities for rural students to receive post-secondary education and training close to their home communities.

To make education more accessible for all students, the province reduced tuition rates by 10 per cent in 1999 and has maintained that level. The Manitoba Bursary Program has been reintroduced to provide important financial assistance to students. Increased provincial investment in colleges and universities has produced a 19 per cent growth in enrolment from 1999 to 2002.

The province has made other important education investments:

- Through the **College Expansion Initiative (CEI)**, 30 new programs have been funded. Each CEI-funded program is connected to a key Manitoba economic sector, such as health services and aerospace.
- College programs with a rural focus have been introduced such, as Assiniboine Community College's land and water management program and precision agriculture program.
- There has been an investment of $5 million in new nursing facilities at Brandon University.
- Annual support to Brandon University's Rural Development Institute assists rural research and enhances the institute's role as a centre of excellence in rural studies.
- ACCESS program funding for Brandon University was increased to help more Aboriginal students pursue university educations.

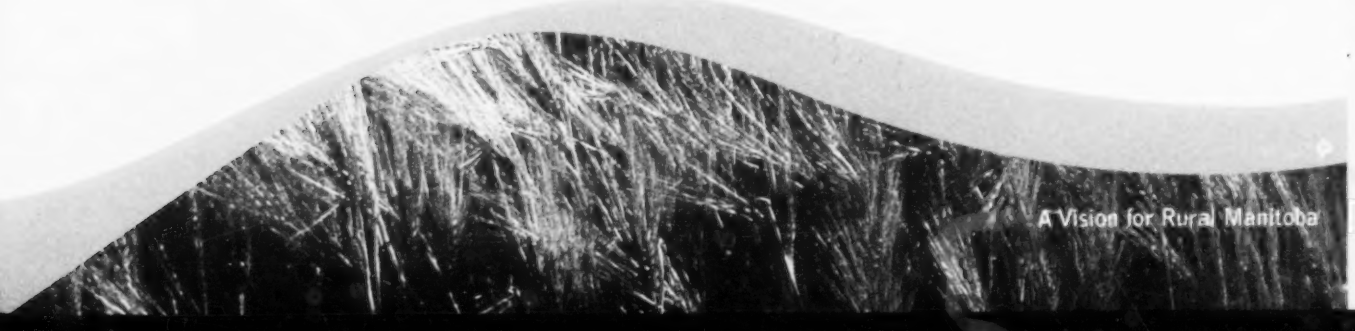
Improving the Rural Quality of Life

Rural Manitobans invest significant time and money to maintain and improve their cultural and recreational institutions. The province supports these organizations, facilities and events that are central to enhancing the quality of life of rural Manitobans.

The **Community Places** program provides cost-sharing grants to help build, upgrade and renovate community facilities. The program's criteria is flexible and accessible to community groups of varying sizes. Examples of recent projects include new ground source heating systems for arenas and additions to day-care centres. Community Places invests $3 million in Manitoba facilities each year.
In addition to Community Places, other provincial programs provide grants for libraries, museums and heritage buildings.

Festival Funding

The wide array of festivals in rural Manitoba contributes greatly to Manitoba's reputation as the festival capital of Canada. The province recently announced new funding to support rural and northern festivals that have emerged as signature annual events. Annual festivals provide communities with a chance to celebrate their unique character while bolstering their region's economic activity.



Western Canada Summer Games

Selkirk, Beausejour, Gimli and Stonewall are hosting the Western Canada Summer Games in August, 2003. Provincial funding of $2.5 million has been provided to support the games, which will involve 2,000 athletes and coaches. The games will boost Manitoba's economy and provide lasting benefits in top-level sports facilities for eastern Manitoba and the Interlake.

Strengthening Families

- Rural families are already benefiting from the government's Healthy Child Initiative and the new long-term plan for child care. As part of Healthy Child Manitoba, Parent-Child Coalitions have been created through partnerships between RHAs, schools and parents. These coalitions offer programs for children and parents focused on literacy, nutrition and parenting skills. In addition, the Healthy Baby program is providing nutritional resources to young mothers to-be across Manitoba.
- Bilingual Service Centres were opened in St. Pierre and Notre Dame de Lourdes to provide area residents with French and English access to provincial, federal and community programs.

Support for Families

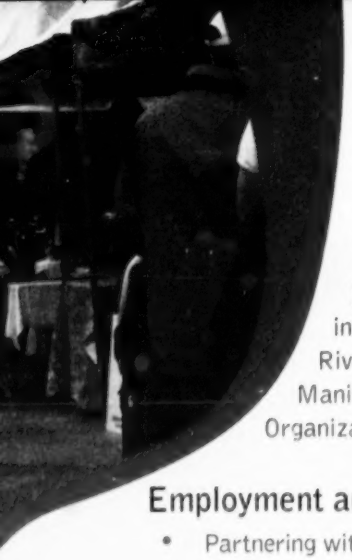
The province has lowered hydro rates for rural and northern Manitobans by equalizing them with Winnipeg rates. This move saves rural and northern Manitobans $14 million annually and ensures all Manitobans share the benefits from one of our most important assets - inexpensive hydro rates.

- The province has provided annual personal income tax savings of about 11.5 per cent and removed 24,000 Manitobans from the tax rolls.
- The Education Property Tax Credit has risen by $150 to $400 since 1999. The $150 increase in the tax credit reduced property taxes by 9.4 per cent in rural Manitoba.
- The Education Support Levy was cut by 29 per cent, saving Manitobans another $27 million in property taxes.

Working with Aboriginal Communities

A government priority continues to be the renewed co-operative relationship with Manitoba's Aboriginal communities.

In 1999, a commission reviewed the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) recommendations and developed plans to improve justice programs for Aboriginal people. Many important community justice and child welfare initiatives have resulted from this work. Discussions continue with three Parkland Metis



communities for a community-based justice strategy. The province, in partnership with Aboriginal organizations, established the AJI-Child Welfare Initiative (AJI-CWI) to create Aboriginal, community-based child welfare agencies.

In addition, core funding has been restored to Friendship Centres across Manitoba including Portage la Prairie, Selkirk, Riverton, Brandon, Dauphin and Swan River. Core funding was also restored to Aboriginal organizations such as the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Southern Chiefs Organization and the Mother of Red Nations Women's Council of Manitoba.

Employment and Economic Development

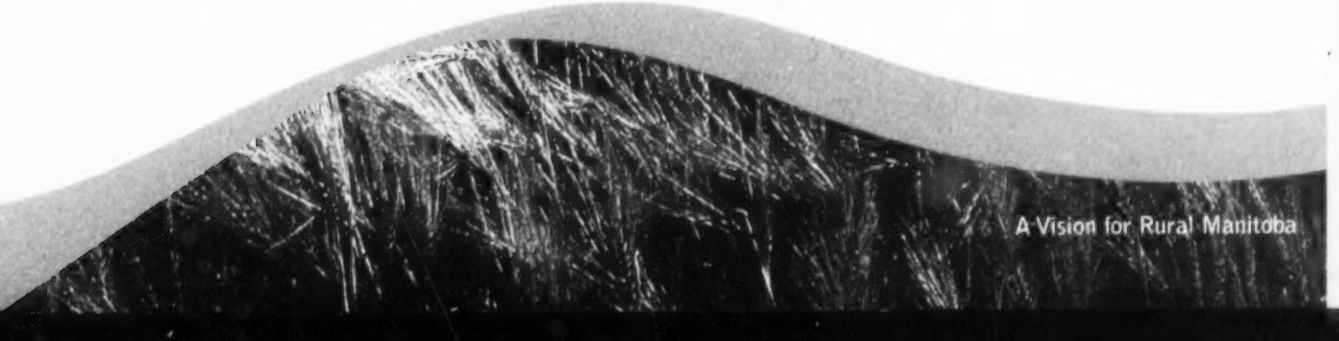
- Partnering with Aboriginal agencies and communities, the province is developing an Aboriginal employment strategy with a focus on recruitment, retention and advancement. In particular, Manitoba Conservation has hired an employment co-ordinator to recruit Aboriginal employees for the department. The province is also working with Manitoba Hydro to increase Aboriginal employment.
- First Nations' participation in the tourism industry is being promoted with a goal to make Manitoba a leading Aboriginal tourism destination.
- An Aboriginal Agriculture Initiative co-ordinator position has been created to work more closely with First Nations communities to promote agricultural opportunities.

Education

- Increased ACCESS funding is helping Aboriginal students pursue post-secondary education. There has been a 36 per cent increase in ACCESS program enrolment following three years of funding increases.
- Assiniboine Community College designed a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) course for First Nations and Metis students. The course allows students to study a culturally sensitive curriculum and stay close to their home communities.

Natural Resources

- A process for the co-management of natural resources has begun through consultations with First Nations and Metis representatives.
- The Aboriginal Resources Advisory Council was created to provide Aboriginal input on development and conservation of natural resources.
- The new Environmental Stewardship Division of Manitoba Conservation works with Aboriginal communities to include Aboriginal entitlements in land use decisions.



Increasing Immigration

- Working with local communities and the federal government, the province increased annual immigration to Manitoba by 50 per cent over the past three years to a high of 4,500. The new target is to increase immigration to 10,000 annually. The provincial and federal government are also working together to provide settlement services, such as English as a Second Language instruction to immigrants.
- The process for international medical graduates to become doctors has been streamlined and many of these graduates will practise in rural Manitoba.
- Provincial economic development officers are working with local leaders and business to ensure rural communities are aware of opportunities for increased immigration.

Safe Communities

Safer communities and crime reduction are important priorities for all Manitobans. To address these issues:

- Full funding was restored for RCMP services for the first time in 10 years, ensuring greater public safety throughout rural Manitoba.
- Ongoing support is being provided for community crime prevention measures, such as Citizens on Patrol.
- A partnership with community organizations in Brandon resulted in a Lighthouses project that offers youth safe, positive, recreational opportunities.
- The Ototema mentoring program in Brandon connects young female offenders with long-term, stable mentors who are positive role models. The Brandon Friendship Centre manages this provincial program.

Supporting Local Leadership

Strong local governments are central to the success of rural communities. Municipal governments provide leadership, ensure community priorities are acted upon, and act as a link between communities and other levels of government. The province has developed effective partnerships with local governments, community organizations and leaders across rural Manitoba.

The 1999 amalgamation of Manitoba Rural Development and Manitoba Urban Affairs into Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs has enabled the government to encourage and lend support to the growing number of co-operative ventures being undertaken between urban and rural communities. This integration of provincial departments also complements the earlier amalgamation of two municipal organizations into the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

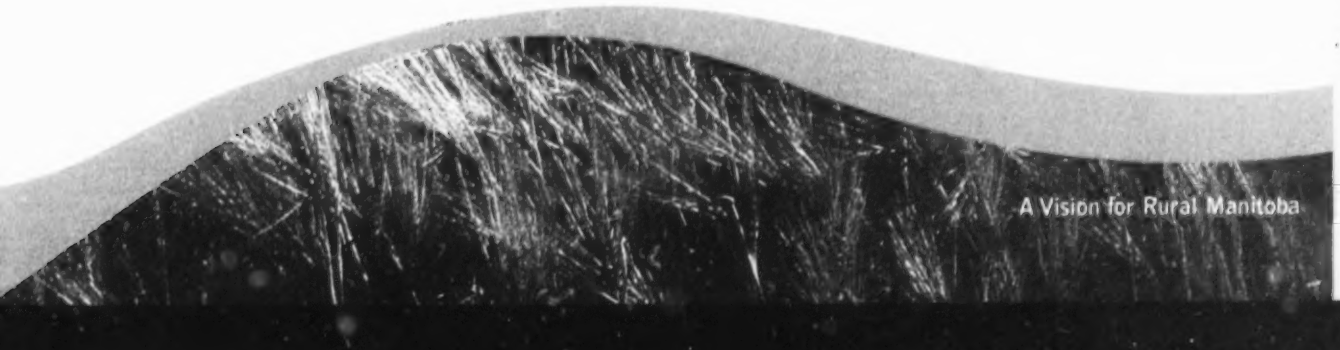
Manitoba is the only province that shares a portion of **tax revenue** with municipalities. In 2002, the Provincial Municipal Tax Sharing program directed over $35 million to municipalities outside of Winnipeg. VLT revenue is also shared with municipalities. **VLT revenue** has been used to support recycling programs, municipal well upgrades, road and drainage reconstruction and economic development projects, among others.

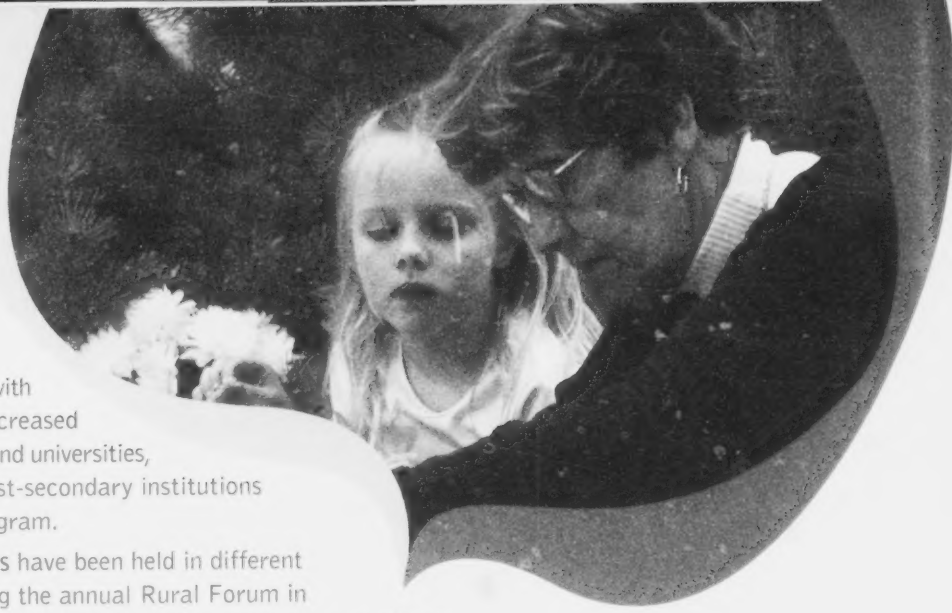
Educational seminars, courses and on-going assistance and advice are also provided to municipal officials by the provincial government.

Regional Co-operation

As all levels of government deal with limited resources and changing demands, co-operative partnerships are emerging to make the best use of limited public funds and help meet common, community objectives.

- Improved land-use planning provides a framework for growth to occur without harming the environment, infrastructure or other communities. Provincial financial incentives and supports have ensured that 95 per cent of municipalities are now involved in **planning districts** or are engaged in land use planning. Since 1999, 15 new planning districts have been formed. The province recently launched a public review of the current land use planning legislation to receive feedback on updating and improving the law.
- The province encourages greater co-operation among local governments by offering expertise and advice to municipalities who are initiating **amalgamation, tax-sharing or service-sharing agreements** with neighbouring municipalities. The province, together with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, developed a **"Tool Kit"** to assist municipalities that are seeking new approaches to governance and service delivery.
- There are more potential partnerships between municipalities and their First Nations neighbours. In the past few years such discussions have become more frequent and important, especially as the **Manitoba Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement** is implemented.
- There are now more **Conservation Districts** that enable neighbouring municipalities to connect and effectively plan and manage water resources.
- The **regional economic development delivery system** is being rebuilt and is encouraging greater collaboration among regional development corporations, regional tourism associations and Community Futures Development corporations.
- The **Capital Region Strategy** is a partnership between the province and capital region municipalities to develop a comprehensive land use plan for the area.





Supporting Youth

- **Affordable** education for youth remains a provincial priority, with reduced tuition, increased grants to colleges and universities, more spaces in post-secondary institutions and a bursary program.
- **Youth round tables** have been held in different locations, including the annual Rural Forum in Brandon. Young Manitobans have the opportunity to discuss issues with the premier and provincial cabinet ministers.
- With the help of Manitoba youth, the province launched the **MB4Youth.ca website** which provides links to youth-related government services. One important link is the Premier's Pipeline - an e-mail address for youth to write directly to the premier.
- The **Partners with Youth Program** provides wage incentives to employers who offer entry-level career positions to young Manitobans. As well, under the **Youth Entrepreneur Support** component of this program, matching grants are available for young Manitobans establishing new businesses.

Building Infrastructure

Recognizing the critical role that transportation plays in the rural economy, the province has committed record funding for Manitoba's highway network. **RoadWorks Manitoba** is a long-term highway construction plan worth $600 million over five years. In 2002, the highways capital construction budget was increased 16 per cent to $120 million.

Other transportation initiatives include:

- A commitment of $16.4 million has been made to the **Prairie Grain Roads Program** for rebuilding rural highways affected by traffic shifts from the grain industry.
- Extensive public consultations on future transportation strategies for Manitoba are taking place through **2020 as part of the Manitoba transport vision** process.
- Manitoba's **Airports Assistance Program** has provided local airports with over $1 million in a three-year period.

*The **Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program** has invested over $42 million in infrastructure renewal in rural Manitoba. The program is cost-shared by the federal government, the province and local governments. Most rural projects upgraded water and sewer systems, reflecting the province's commitment to water quality. Other types of projects include a library expansion in Minnedosa, an industrial park upgrade in Niverville and a recycling facility expansion in the RM of Riverside.*

3. Sustaining Resources

The commercial fishing industry in Manitoba produces about 12 million kilograms of fish valued at about $23 million per year.

Water Management

Manitoba is fortunate to have abundant lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater. Whether it's the water sources used for drinking water, the lakes used by vacationers or the rivers producing hydro-electricity, water is critical to the well-being of Manitobans.

Water Management and Drainage

- In the 2002/03 Provincial Budget, drainage projects received $10 million, up almost $2 million in the past two years. Flood protection has increased in the Red River basin with the development of the Red River floodway expansion and new community ring dikes. Expanded Red River floodway compensation legislation is also being developed.
- The export of fresh water from Manitoba water basins has been banned through legislation to protect Manitoba's water and environment.
- Water management plans are being developed for the Winkler Aquifer, Oak Lake Aquifer, Lake Dauphin and the Assiniboine Delta Aquifer, among others.
- Water allocation plans have been implemented for several aquifers and rivers.
- More resources have been dedicated for the water licensing process.

Water Quality

- A new Lake Winnipeg Action Plan includes the establishment of a Lake Winnipeg stewardship board, protection for forests and vegetation along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers and a commitment to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous levels in the lake.
- To assess water quality, the province has launched studies into the Assiniboine River, and the effects of nutrient management.
- The Manitoba Ground Water Quality Initiative was launched to test approximately 1,000 wells in agricultural areas.
- Through EDPA funding, the Canadian Coast Guard ship "Namao" was repaired and is now being used by the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium to conduct research on the lake.

The new provincial Riparian Tax Credit program encourages farm operators to improve their river and stream bank management. The program recognizes those farmers who already have management plans. The tax credit is the first of its kind in Canada and is available to farmers and livestock producers who make a three-year commitment to protect their river banks. The program encourages the elimination of tillage and the reduction of grazing and watering by livestock on lands adjacent to rivers and streams.

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Drinking Water Strategy

To protect the quality of Manitoba's drinking water, the province has taken several actions.

- A new Office of Drinking Water Quality has been created with 12 staff and increased resources.
- Subsidized drinking water tests are available for private-well owners.
- Mandatory training and certification for operators of drinking water facilities have been introduced.
- *The Drinking Water Safety Act,* introduced measures to strengthen drinking water safety, (including new regulations for Manitoba's 1,500 semi-public systems) through sampling schedules, monitoring and compliance.
- The Manitoba Water Services Board and the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program have provided significant investment in drinking water infrastructure in rural communities. From 2001 to 2003, over $30 million in provincial funds has been invested in upgrading water systems.

Conservation District Expansion

Conservation Districts have become highly effective partnerships between the province, local municipalities, farmers and outside organizations. Funded jointly by the province and municipalities, the number of Conservation Districts has grown from nine to 16 in just over three years. The land managed by the districts has grown by 40 per cent in the same period. Conservation Districts are increasingly taking the lead in water management planning and encouraging innovative farming and land management practices.

Taking Action on Climate Change

Manitoba is addressing the issue of climate change and acting to meet the reduction targets of greenhouse gas emissions set out in the Kyoto Protocol.

- The Manitoba government is planning to increase the use and production of ethanol, which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by burning gas. Mohawk's ethanol plant in Minnedosa has 40 per cent fewer greenhouse gas emissions than an equivalent amount of gasoline.
- Manitoba Hydro has switched from coal to natural gas at its Selkirk generating plant, cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 200 kilotonnes a year.
- Manitoba Hydro exports (primarily into the U.S.) displace over 10 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions every year.
- Through the Energy Development Initiative, the province is researching and encouraging the use of alternative energies such as wind, hydrogen, solar and ground-source heat pumps.

Sustaining Manitoba's Forests and Parks

Three new provincial parks, including Pembina Valley in southcentral Manitoba have been created since 1999. More investments are being made into campsites, cottage lots and the Watchable Wildlife program for Manitoba's parks. The Sustainable Forest Plan includes new funding to gather scientific data and develop a forest inventory. This kind of inventory has not been done for decades in Manitoba. The forest plan includes increased employment, economic development and co-management opportunities for Aboriginal communities.

Livestock Stewardship Initiative

The Livestock Stewardship Initiative aims to successfully combine the goals of economic growth and environmental sustainability. Livestock production and processing have grown into multi-billion dollar industries. At the same time, the province has improved its environmental monitoring and land use planning.

Since 1999, the province has created 20 new positions and allocated $2.6 million more for the monitoring, inspection and enforcement of livestock operations and manure storage facilities.

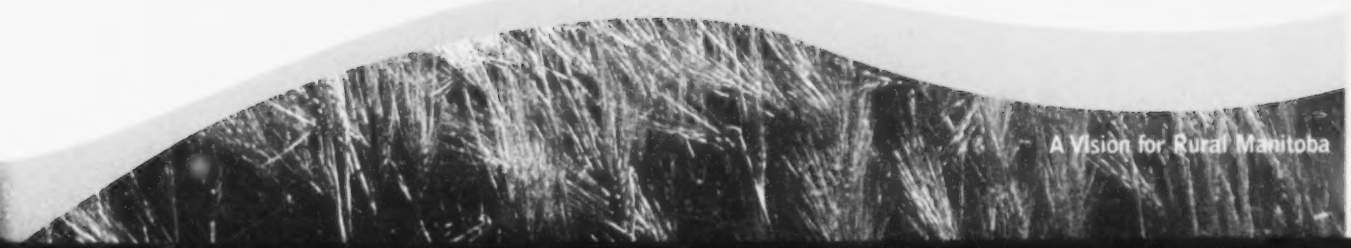
Local land-use decision making has been supported and improved through incentives and support that encourage more municipalities to join planning districts and engage in planning activities.

First Nations Co-management

A process to co-manage natural resources has begun with First Nations and Metis. Co-management allows the negotiation of shared roles and responsibilities such as participation in decision-making and monitoring.

In 2000, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the provincial government and the West Region Tribal Council (WRTC) in the Parklands region. The MOU will guide future discussions on resource co-management, including a plan to manage walleye stocks in Lake Dauphin. In 2002, the province and the WRTC agreed to a limited conservation closure on Lake Dauphin to protect fish stocks.

The province is in preliminary discussions with the Manitoba Métis Federation about increased participation of Métis in areas of natural resource management.



Looking Forward

Together, the provincial government and rural Manitobans have laid a solid foundation for the future growth of rural communities. Rural Manitobans are not only improving their own communities, they are at the forefront of initiatives that will provide province-wide benefits, such as the production of ethanol and the growth of the nutraceutical industry.

Measurable progress is being made in important areas. The rural economy is being strengthened with supports for farmers, partnerships with business and investments in new technologies. Upgrades to infrastructure, such as drinking water systems, are improving the sustainability of rural communities. Increased investments in healthcare and education are ensuring that rural Manitobans have improved access to these and other critical services. And a renewed commitment to water management, alternative energies and forests and parks are helping protect the rural environment.

These are the building blocks for the future and the province recognizes that there is more work to be done. Rural communities are greatly affected by changes in technology, transportation and the world economy. The provincial government is committed to ensuring that rural Manitobans have access to the opportunities and services needed to successfully adapt to these changes. The province will continue to encourage and support the connections between Manitoba's various regions. Our success depends on the success of our rural, urban and northern communities.

The provincial vision for rural Manitoba is an evolving one and is based on continuing consultation and discussion with rural Manitobans. We encourage all Manitobans to share their opinions, priorities and ideas for the future of rural Manitoba.

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